



Sunday 3rd January, 2021
06.50

Dear parents and carers,

Possible Implications of the New Variant of Covid-19

I hope that you have all had a good Christmas break, however you made it work for you (which probably wasn't what you would ever have expected). I hope that you have had time to re-charge your batteries, and are feeling ready to take on the new year. Despite us all looking forward to a fresh start in 2021, and the beginning of the Spring term, we are all now facing a new challenge...

You will probably have heard in the national news that there has been a recent surge in Covid cases due to the virus's highly infectious new variant spreading nationwide. I understand that this may be causing many members of our school community to be feeling worried for themselves and their loved ones.

The worsening situation has led to education leaders to call on the government to reverse its decision to press ahead with face-to-face learning for many pupils:

- The national Education Union (NEU) – the U.K.'s largest education union – has advised members against working in school and said that all primary and secondary schools should remain closed for a further two weeks after the school holiday.
- The National Association of Head Teachers has also called for a brief period of remote learning for most children. It has said that it would ask head teachers not to take action against staff who refused to work in school if they felt unsafe.
- The NASUWT union wrote to the education secretary to urge an "immediate nationwide move to remote education".
- The Association of School and College Leaders said face-to-face teaching should be restricted to only vulnerable children and those of key workers until at least the 18th January.
- The Independent Schools Council, which represents more than 1,300 independent schools in the U.K., said it shared the safety concerns expressed by the unions.

What does this mean for your child, in our school community?

There are a number of possibilities:

- 1) School will fully re-open on Tuesday 5th January, as originally planned; or
- 2) The government will announce that all primary schools will remain shut to most pupils, and children will learn from home for a period of time (with vulnerable children and those of key workers continuing to attend); or

3) The Local Authority (Warwickshire County Council) will advise all Warwickshire primary schools to remain shut to most pupils, and children will learn from home for a period of time (with vulnerable children and those of key workers continuing to attend); or

4) School will be partially or fully closed due to union members not attending school, and children will learn from home for a period of time (with vulnerable children and those of key workers continuing to attend)

A number of staff at our school are union members. Over the course of today, I shall be asking them to let me know whether or not they plan to attend school. As in normal times, a reduction in staffing levels could necessitate a partial or full school closure. Should NEU members decide that they will not be attending school, it is my understanding that they will co-operate in working with school leaders to ensure there is

sufficient cover in place to facilitate schools opening to provide cover for the children of key workers and the vulnerable. As always, I will need to look at the staff that I have available and our risk assessment before deciding what level of care and supervision I can offer.

I fully appreciate that the lack of clarity for your child's return to school on Tuesday will be very frustrating for you (as it is for me), and sincerely apologise for any dismay this is causing. I am composing this letter to you at 6.00 am, and I will send out further updates to you later today by email and text message via Teachers2parents, as soon as I receive communication from the Department for Education, Warwickshire County Council and union members.

In the meantime, please do not telephone the school office, as school is closed today (Sunday), and school administrative staff are not contracted to work on teacher training days (tomorrow – Monday).

Thank you, in anticipation of your patience and usual support in this unfolding situation. Please be assured that all school staff will, of course, continue to implement appropriate safety measures to help mitigate the risk of transmission and do our utmost to keep our whole school community safe.

Best wishes,



Juliette Westwood
Executive Head Teacher